

September 14, 2014
Noah
Noah's World
Genesis 6:5-14

Opening words: Today, I begin a new three-part sermon series, *Noah: The True Story*. I have wanted to preach on him for years, but have decided to do it now for one reason, the movie. Its popularity has many asking about this ancient character. In this series, I want to look at what the Bible says about him and not Hollywood. Noah's story is found in Genesis six through nine. However, before we look at the Bible, it is important that you know some background.

Noah's is found in the very first book of the Bible, Genesis. The title, Genesis, is Greek in origin and can be translated "birth" or "history of origin." You can divide the book of Genesis into two large sections. The first eleven chapters are considered pre-historical in nature. Chapters twelve through fifty are considered patriarchal history. In other words, it is the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Noah's story is found in chapters six through nine, so it is considered pre-historical. We are more familiar with Noah's story than we are of most. However, that familiarity does not mean it is not sacred. This the question for the entire series. How does Noah's true story help us live out the faith? Before you hear the scripture lesson, I want to give you a warning.

This is Rally Day, and for that reason I wanted this message to be fun and light. That is why I chose Noah. I became preoccupied with the animals and forgot the story is about judgment. An entire generation was eliminated. There is nothing fun or light about this text, it is dark and heavy. The theme of this morning's text is wickedness. Our scripture lesson for today is Genesis 6:5-14. Let me call this message *Noah's World*.

Genesis 6:5-13 The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. ⁶ The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. ⁷ So the LORD said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them." ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. ⁹ This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. ¹⁰ Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. ¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. ¹² God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. ¹³ So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. ¹⁴ So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out.

I love this story! A new believer was on a plane with an intellectual (a man educated beyond his intelligence). He sneered at her reading the Bible. He asked if she believed it? "Yes", she replied. "Jonah and the whale story?" "Yes." "How did it happen?" "Don't know, but I'll find out when I get to heaven." "What if Jonah isn't there?", he asked. "Then I guess you'll have to ask him for me." Let there be no doubt about it. The story of Noah is a story about judgment. If that surprises you, say, **"Amen!"**

Noah's story is not just limited to the pages of the Bible. Over 270 cultures around the world have ancient stories about a great flood, and most of them tell the same story:

- * Man became corrupt
- * The Flood was worldwide
- * Eight people survived the flood
- * Representatives of all land animals were saved
- * A dove was released to find dry land
- * The survivors came down from a mountain to repopulate the whole world
- * And the hero's name is often a variant of Noah

Historians have a rule of thumb they follow when encountering stories that are repeated across many cultures which seem to agree on so much. If there are this many facts that agree... the story's probably true. If all that makes you think, say, **"Amen!"**

The Biblical story of Noah can be traced back to Adam and Eve. They were the crowning jewel of God's creation, but were bent on sin. You remember the story. They ate from the forbidden tree and were expelled from the Garden of Eden. That moment of disobedience was one of the pivotal moments in world history. That ancient story tells us how sin entered our world. The world has never recovered. Like a spark that ignites a western fire and consumes everything in its path, so does sin. Not a single generation has escaped. Our generation is no exception. Noah's generation was not spared. As a matter of fact, Noah's world lived at an all-time low. Verse five speaks volumes. It says, *"The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time."* There was only one thing left for God to do, eliminate them. Never forget, Noah is a story about judgment. If you want to fully understand the passage, then you have to be able to clearly understand wickedness. Webster defines being wicked as being disgustingly unpleasant or vile. The wicked care nothing about human need. As a matter of fact, they use others for personal gain. In their opinion, the hungry and the thirsty should stay hungry and thirsty. The wicked care nothing about God. They live for the moment and never consider the sacred or eternal. How many wicked people can you name? The Bible is full of wicked people.

Do you remember the story of Cain and Abel? (Genesis 4) They were the sons of Adam and Eve. Cain was a farmer and Abel was a shepherd. They both made an offering to God. Cain brought fruit to God; Abel brought meat. Cain was cheap and Abel was extremely generous. God preferred Abel's offering. Cain was upset his offering wasn't accepted and decided to kill his brother.

Cain and Abel went for a walk, but only Cain came home. There is no other way to say it. Cain was wicked! How do you kill your own brother?

Do you remember the story of King Herod? (Matthew 2) You must remember his story. We tell his story annually. The Magi came from the east because they had seen a star. That star was a signal that a king had been born, so they went to the palace to worship him. The problem was, the king wasn't born in the palace; the king was born in a barn a few miles away. Their unexpected arrival disturbed the insecure king. Herod lied to the Magi and said he wanted to worship the king too, but they saw through his lie. The Magi return home by a different route, and the newborn king is taken into Egypt. When Herod discovers he has been fooled, he does the most wicked thing. He has every baby boy under the age of two murdered. There is no other way to say it. Herod was wicked! How do you kill babies?

Do you remember the story of Herodias? (Mark 6:22-25) She led a horrible life from beginning to end. According to the scriptures, she married her brother-in-law. John the Baptist protested against her bigamous marriage. She didn't take criticism well, and waited for an opportunity to get even. That opportunity came when her daughter, Salome, seductively danced for her new step-father. He offered her anything. After consulting with her mother, Salome proclaimed all she wanted was the head of John the Baptist on a platter. There is no other way to say it. Herodias was wicked! Who wants to see a head on a platter? Yet, the Bible does not have exclusive rights on wickedness. History is filled with the wicked.

Have you ever heard of Adolph Hitler? He was named Chancellor of Germany in 1933 and led that country until his death in 1945. His political aggression led to World War II, which caused the death and destruction of tens of millions of people, including six million Jews. There is no other way to say it. Adolph Hitler was wicked.

Have you ever heard of Osama bin Laden? He is the face of modern day terrorism and took credit for the September 11 attacks. The FBI placed a \$25 million bounty on his head. For nearly ten years our country looked for him. We shot him on May 2, 2011. Are you glad he is dead? There is no other way to say it. Osama bin Laden was wicked.

What do these names have in common?

- Mao Zedong
- Ivan the Terrible
- Idi Amin
- Pol Pot
- Joseph Stalin
- Nero
- Genghis Khan
- Emperor Hirohito
- Adolf Eichmann
- Heinrich Himmler

Each one has been described by the western world as being wicked. (I wonder if the eastern world would put any Americans on this wicked list?) We understand what the Bible says about Noah's world, because our world has no shortage of wickedness. If you can agree with that statement, say, "**Amen!**" The one thing I hate about the wicked is that there is so much of them inside of me.

There is one thing you should never forget about Noah's story. It is an Old Testament story, and we are New Testament people. Don't just jump over that statement, think about it. It is like we have two different Gods. The God of the Old Testament is about vengeance, the God of the New Testament embraces grace. The God of the Old Testament directs his love at one group, the Jews. The God of the New Testament loves everyone. The Old Testament is dominated by the law, the New Testament is dominated by Jesus. The transformation of God is impressive and we should all celebrate the fact that we are New Testament people. If we were Old Testament people, then God may eliminate our world. Being New Testament people means that God is patient, longing to save everyone. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "*He (God) is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*" I find the word "everyone" to be disturbing.

The name Jeffrey Dahmer still has a hold on us. You remember his story. Between 1978 and 1991, he killed seventeen boys and men. I will spare you of the details. While serving time at Wisconsin's Columbia Correctional Institution, he announced to the world he was a born-again Christian. His own father sent him the evangelical material that led to his conversion. Shortly after, he was baptized. Three years later, he was beaten and killed by a fellow inmate. How do you feel about Jeffrey Dahmer's conversion? Do you think he was sincere? Do you think he is in heaven at this moment? Do you think he was insincere? Do you think his murderer did the right thing? In Noah's world, the wicked perished. In our world, the wicked, like us, always have an opportunity to repent. Never forget, we are New Testament people. And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**" Let me end with this light story.

One day, when Vice President Calvin Coolidge was presiding over the Senate, one Senator angrily told another to go "straight to hell". The offended Senator complained to Coolidge as presiding officer, and Cal looked up from the book he had been leafing through while listening to the debate. "I've been looking through the rule book," he said. "You don't have to go." And, neither do you. Anyone who knows Jesus as their Lord and Savior has heaven waiting for them. And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"